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Item 137 of the preliminary list*
Pattern of conferences

Pattern of conferences

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains information on matters relating to conference management pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 69/250 and 32/72 and other relevant mandates. Statistical data are provided as supplementary information. The documents of the Committee on Conferences are available electronically at http://coc.dgacm.org.

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I. Meetings management

A. Calendar of conferences and meetings

1. Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

1. Requests to meet during the seventieth session of the General Assembly have been received from the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Disarmament Commission, the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (see supplementary information,[1] sect. I). In accordance with established practice, the requests will be reviewed by the Committee on Conferences for recommendation to the General Assembly.

2. Draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2016 and 2017

2. The provisional calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields for 2016 and 2017 (E/2015/L.8) was reviewed by the Committee on Conferences on 29 June 2015 and its comments were transmitted to the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its coordination and management meeting in July 2015 (E/2015/85).

3. During its substantive session, in September 2015, the Committee on Conferences will review the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2016 and 2017 (A/AC.172/2015/L.2) and transmit its recommendations to the General Assembly in its report for 2015 (to be issued as A/70/32, annexes I and II).

3. Intersessional departures

4. The Committee on Conferences approved the following requests:

(a) Request received in December 2014 from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to hold four meetings outside regular meeting hours and also to extend its autumn session of 2014 by two days;

(b) Request received in April 2015 from the Advisory Committee to extend the duration of three of its meetings of its winter session of 2015 outside regular meeting hours;

(c) Request received in 2014 from the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for an additional plenary meeting during the eighth session of the Conference, held in June 2015;

(d) Request received in 2015 from the Commission on the Status of Women for an additional meeting during its fifty-ninth session;

(e) Request received in 2015 from the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to extend the duration of one of its meetings outside regular meeting hours.

[1] Available from http://coc.dgacm.org/2015/Documents/2015_Supplementary_Information.pdf.

B. Utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

1. Analysis of meeting performance indicators of United Nations organs

Utilization factor by number of meetings of bodies in the core sample

5. The utilization factor by duty station for the past three years is summarized in table 1, while the details by body for the past three years on the utilization of conference resources allocated to a core sample of bodies that met in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi is presented in section II, table 1, of the supplementary information. The overall utilization factor for meetings of the core sample with interpretation at all four duty stations in 2014 was 86 per cent, an improvement of 4 percentage points compared with 2013. This is the result of fewer cancellations and less time lost owing to late starts and early conclusions, in addition to more successful reassignments in 2014. At the four duty stations, the number of meetings with interpretation in the core sample increased by 8 per cent, from 1,846 in 2013 to 1,996 in 2014.

Provision of conference services to all meetings held

6. The total number of meetings with interpretation increased by 6 per cent, from 6,695 in 2013 to 7,114 in 2014. The utilization factor for all meetings with interpretation serviced by the four duty stations increased from 77 per cent in 2013 to 80 per cent in 2014. This is attributed to a decrease in cancellations by 11 per cent and a reduction in time lost by 8 per cent (see sect. II, tables 6 and 7, of the supplementary information).

Table 1
Utilization factor by number of meetings of bodies in the core sample by duty station

	Number of meetings, 2014						*Utilization factor (percentage)*
Duty station	*A (programmed)*	*B (added)*	*C (cancelled)*	*D (held)*	*E[a] (reassigned)*	*F (minutes lost)*	*2014[b]*
New York	1 173	124	208	1 089	126	26 040	83
Geneva	704	8	9	703	1	8 285	92
Vienna	177	2	7	172	–	3 010	87
Nairobi	28	4	–	32	–	735	87
Total	**2 082**	**138**	**224**	**1 996**	**127**	**38 070**	**86**

	Number of meetings, 2013						Utilization factor (percentage)
Duty station	A (programmed)	B (added)	C (cancelled)	D (held)	E[a] (reassigned)	F (minutes lost)	2013[b]
New York	1 202	80	225	1 057	112	29 500	78
Geneva	535	26	13	548	2	7 760	90
Vienna	198	1	6	193	–	3 840	86
Nairobi	42	8	2	48	–	1 320	81
Total	**1 977**	**115**	**246**	**1 846**	**114**	**42 420**	**82**

	Number of meetings, 2012						Utilization factor (percentage)
Duty station	A (programmed)	B (added)	C (cancelled)	D (held)	E[a] (reassigned)	F (minutes lost)	2012[b]
New York	1 162	50	196	1 016	101	28 810	79
Geneva	641	22	5	658	–	7 945	93
Vienna	169	–	3	166	–	2 895	89
Nairobi	26	–	–	26	–	370	92
Total	**1 998**	**72**	**204**	**1 866**	**101**	**40 020**	**84**

[a] Related reassignments.
[b] Utilization factor, counting only related reassignments.

7. Pursuant to paragraph 36 of General Assembly resolution 69/250, the Secretariat identified five core sample bodies as having a utilization factor below 80 per cent for the past three consecutive years. Those bodies, identified in section II, table 1.A, of the supplementary information, are the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group, the Committee on Information, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law and the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization. The 10-year averages of four of those bodies — all based in New York — are also below the benchmark of 80 per cent, as described in paragraph 9.

8. In May and June 2015, the Chair of the Committee on Conferences met the presiding officers of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, the Committee on Information, the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group. Although the mandate of the Chair relates to the previous three sessions, those bodies had already completed their main session for 2015 at the time of the meetings and the additional information aided the discussions. Of those four bodies based in New York that had not reached the benchmark in any regular session between 2012 and 2014, three exceeded the utilization benchmark of 80 per cent in 2015. The Chair of the Committee on Conferences encouraged the presiding officers and secretariats to continue to employ the same and/or additional measures in the future to achieve optimum utilization. The

Chair also wrote to the Chair of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, which is based in Vienna, outlining possible measures to improve its utilization factor and encouraging the Commission's secretariat to continue to work closely with the Conference Management Service in Vienna and the Meetings Management Section in New York.

9. None of the bodies based in Geneva or Nairobi in the core sample had utilization factors below the benchmark of 80 per cent for each of the past three years.

10. Each of the following seven intergovernmental bodies based in New York has a 10 year (2005-2014) average utilization factor for mandated sessions below the benchmark of 80 per cent (see sect. II, tables 8 and 9, of the supplementary information):

(a) Commission for Social Development (78 per cent);

(b) Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (77 per cent);

(c) Commission on Population and Development (76 per cent);

(d) Committee on Contributions (72 per cent);

(e) Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group (69 per cent);

(f) Committee on Information (66 per cent);

(g) Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization (59 per cent).

11. The Committee on Contributions adjusted its programme of work and reached a utilization factor of 88 per cent in 2014, up from 71 per cent in 2013 and 61 per cent in 2012, exceeding the benchmark for the first time since 2004. The Statistical Commission reached a utilization factor of 96 per cent in 2014, up from 81 per cent in 2013, raising its 10-year average from 79 to 81 per cent. The Commission on Population and Development has reached utilization factors above the benchmark at each of its annual sessions since 2010 and in 2014 achieved its best result — 96 per cent. The Commission for Social Development moved up from 69 per cent in 2013 to 88 per cent in 2014. The Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization had a utilization factor of 48 per cent in 2014, down from 52 per cent in 2013. In 2014, the Committee on Information increased its utilization factor to 75 per cent, the highest since 2009.

12. Beginning in 2013, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management expanded its efforts to assist intergovernmental bodies to enhance their utilization of resources. Meeting services reports to the presiding officers and the secretariats of all calendar bodies before and immediately after their scheduled sessions now include statistical data on the utilization factor for the previous 10 years with analyses. Discussions are held with the secretariats of bodies whose utilization falls far below the benchmark, and client feedback is actively sought to help to identify specific ways to improve the utilization factor.

13. The conference managers fully appreciate the complicated and unpredictable nature of intergovernmental processes, respect the judgement of presiding officers

and are mindful that efforts to enhance the utilization of conference resources must not prejudice the substantive work of the meeting bodies.

Planning accuracy

14. The planning accuracy factor at the four duty stations is shown in table 2 (see also supplementary information, sect. II, table 5). Globally, the factor for 2014 was 83 per cent, which was slightly higher than the level of 82 per cent in 2013 but lower than the level of 86 per cent in 2012. New York saw a further increase in additions to programmed meetings, while cancellations remained high. The Fifth Committee added 37 meetings to its programme during the main part of the sixty-ninth session, compared with only 5 in 2013 and 6 in 2012. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions added 24 meetings with interpretation in 2014, compared with 18 in 2013 and 10 in 2012.

Table 2
Planning accuracy factor by number and percentage of meetings of bodies in the core sample by duty station

	Number of meetings, 2014					*Planning accuracy factor (percentage)*
Duty station	*A (programmed)*	*B (added)*	*C (cancelled)*	*D (held)*	*E (reassigned)*	*2014*
New York	1 173	124	208	1 089	126	72
Geneva	704	8	9	703	1	98
Vienna	177	2	7	172	–	95
Nairobi	28	4	–	32	–	86
Total	**2 082**	**138**	**224**	**1 996**	**127**	**83**

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Duty station	*A (programmed)*	*B (added)*	*C (cancelled)*	*D (held)*	*E (reassigned)*	*2013*
New York	1 202	80	225	1 057	112	75
Geneva	535	26	13	548	2	93
Vienna	198	1	6	193	–	96
Nairobi	42	8	2	48	–	76
Total	**1 977**	**115**	**246**	**1 846**	**114**	**82**

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Duty station	A (programmed)	B (added)	C (cancelled)	D (held)	E (reassigned)	2012
New York	1 162	50	196	1 016	101	79
Geneva	641	22	5	658	–	96
Vienna	169	–	3	166	–	98
Nairobi	26	–	–	26	–	100
Total	**1 998**	**72**	**204**	**1 866**	**101**	**86**

2. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required"

15. The statistics on the provision of conference services in 2014 for bodies entitled to meet "as required" in New York and Geneva are presented in table 3. In New York, the rate fell from 98 per cent in 2013 to 97 per cent in 2014. On the other hand, the number of such meetings provided with interpretation increased by 20 per cent, owing mainly to an increase in meetings of the Security Council (from 540 in 2013 to 651 in 2014). The number of meetings of the General Assembly increased by 36 per cent, from 245 in 2013 to 332 in 2014. Those increases were partially offset by a lower number of "as required" meetings of the Economic and Social Council and the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Office for Project Services, totalling 22 fewer meetings in 2014 than in 2013 (see also sect. III, table 1, of the supplementary information).

Table 3
Comparative analysis of the provision of conference services for bodies entitled to meet "as required" in New York and Geneva

	Meetings with interpretation services				Meetings without interpretation services		
Duty station	Requested	Provided	Not provided	Percentage provided	Requested	Held	Percentage held
New York							
2014	1 110	1 075	35	97	614	614	100
2013	921	899	22	98	420	420	100
2012	687	664	23	97	411	411	100
Geneva							
2014	63	63	–	100	–	–	–
2013	32	32	–	100	–	–	–
2012	54	54	–	100	–	–	–

3. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

16. Table 4 and section IV of the supplementary information summarize the provision of conference services to regional and other major groupings of Member States at the four duty stations for 2014. In New York, the rate declined from 96 per cent in 2013 to 88 per cent in 2014, but the number of meetings provided with interpretation changed little. The Department's ability to meet the higher number of requests was affected by the greater demands detailed above. In Geneva, the demand more than doubled in relation to 2013. Services were provided for 29 more meetings than in 2013, although the percentage declined to 76 per cent, compared with 81 per cent in 2013. Although the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi do not usually receive requests to provide interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, both are able to provide such groups with such services whenever they have the capacity. In 2014, the two duty stations met three and seven such requests, respectively.

Table 4
Comparative analysis of the provision of conference services for meetings of regional and other major groupings

A. 2014

	Meetings with interpretation services				*Meetings without interpretation services*		
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Percentage provided*	*Requested*	*Held*	*Percentage held*
New York	177	155	20	88	942	942	100
Geneva	78	59	19	76	482	482	100
Vienna	3	3	–	100	319	319	100
Nairobi	7	7	–	100	318	318	100
Total	**265**	**224**	**41**	**85**	**2 061**	**2 061**	**100**

B. 2013

	Meetings with interpretation services				*Meetings without interpretation services*		
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Percentage provided*	*Requested*	*Held*	*Percentage held*
New York	165	158	7	96	815	815	100
Geneva	37	30	7	81	595	595	100
Vienna	2	2	–	100	345	345	100
Nairobi	5	5	–	100	506	506	100
Total	**209**	**195**	**14**	**93**	**2 261**	**2 261**	**100**

C. 2012

	Meetings with interpretation services				*Meetings without interpretation services*		
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Percentage provided*	*Requested*	*Held*	*Percentage held*
New York	163	155	8	95	942	942	100
Geneva	116	98	18	84	626	626	100
Vienna	1	1	–	100	359	359	100
Nairobi	1	1	–	100	268	268	100
Total	**281**	**255**	**26**	**91**	**2 195**	**2 195**	**100**

4. Utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

17. In 2014, in accordance with several resolutions of the General Assembly, including paragraph 28 of resolution 69/250, all meetings of Nairobi-based bodies were held in Nairobi, in conformity with the headquarters rule.

5. Utilization of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa

18. The utilization of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) increased by 15 per cent from an average of nearly 70 per cent over the previous three years to 85 per cent during the biennium 2014-2015. Among the factors contributing to that surge were proactive marketing initiatives spearheaded by the letter of the Executive Secretary of ECA to other United Nations agencies in Addis Ababa urging them to make the centre their primary conference venue, an increase in the occupancy rate of the Zambezi Building (formerly the new office facility) with the arrival of five additional United Nations agencies and closer partnership with non-United Nations regional organizations, such as the African Union Commission and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

19. Given the number of conferences scheduled for 2015 through the African Union Commission-ECA partnership, a further increase in the capacity utilization rate is envisaged. Conference rooms 3 to 6 returned to full capacity in March 2014, thereby expanding overall capacity. A competitive pricing structure, based on a study of the conference-services market, preventive maintenance and the upgrading of facilities, has been introduced, as requested by the General Assembly in paragraph 33 of its resolution 69/250, to increase the market share. In view of the increased demand and the higher capacity utilization rate, satisfying the market has become just as important as securing it.

C. Impact of the implementation of the capital master plan on meetings held at Headquarters

20. The capital master plan is now complete. The migration from the North Lawn Building to the General Assembly Building was finalized with the completion of level 1B of the latter at the end of December 2014. Consequently, meeting room capacity has been fully restored and even increased with the addition of two medium-sized rooms and a small room. An updated chart showing the availability of

the conference rooms during the final phase is provided in section V of the supplementary information.

D. Accessibility measures

21. The Division of Conference Management at the United Nations Office at Geneva continues to provide international sign language interpretation and video captioning to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to the mandated panels on disability of the Human Rights Council, in accordance with the legislative mandates approved by the General Assembly. Upon request and when feasible, the Division has also provided those services to extrabudgetary panels of the Council accessible to persons with disabilities (on a reimbursable basis) and provides selected documents in Braille to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the only body currently entitled to that service in Geneva. Hearing loops are also available for use in most rooms equipped with modern technology and documentation in Braille is provided on request.

II. Integrated global management

A. Status report

22. Single information technology systems are now operational, with maintenance work and enhancements continuing as part of the stabilization phase. The meetings management system, gMeets, is operational at the four main duty stations. The documents planning and processing system, gDoc, was launched in Geneva and New York in May 2014. The Documents Control and Productivity Monitoring System, which is integrated with the other conference management tools, continues to be used in Vienna and Nairobi. The computer-assisted translation and terminology management system, gText, has been launched at the four main duty stations. Lastly, the gData system captures budget and finance data pertaining to conference management from the four main duty stations for performance reporting and management, although further fine-tuning will be necessary based on feedback.

23. A governance mechanism has been established to coordinate information technology initiatives by cultivating effective relationships between the business and information technology units at the four main duty stations. The Department has finalized its review of the terms of reference of its Information Technology Governance Board, in consultation with the Office of Information and Communications Technology, to ensure that its roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. In addition, a steering group, chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and comprising senior management at all duty stations, has been established to approach priority issues systemically. Its responsibilities include overseeing the harmonization of workflows and the exchange of best practices within and among duty stations, the mainstreaming of global information technology systems and the streamlining of global reporting structures and procedures to ensure clarity and to contribute to the achievement of the Department's integrated global management objectives.

24. In response to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 38 of its resolution 68/251 and paragraph 48 of its resolution 69/250, the Under-Secretary-

General for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Directors-General of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi have agreed upon a clear delineation of their responsibilities concerning conference management policies, operations and resource utilization and have proposed revisions to the current bulletins of the Secretary-General that define the organization of the Department and of the Offices. The drafts of the revised bulletins are currently under review.

25. As shown in table 5, the total amount of translation workload shared continued to be modest owing to limited spare capacity at the four main duty stations. The lower level in 2014 was due to the fact that the surge in 2013 was caused by the transfer of responsibility for processing the pre-session documents of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women from Geneva to New York. Documents in this category are no longer being counted as workload sharing.

Table 5
Workload sharing
(Words shared)

	2009	*2010*	*2011*[a]	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*
New York	–	140 780	4 923 310	367 781	2 677 685	814 188
Geneva	–	212 480	27 360	8 310	146 890	98 526
Vienna	170 224	188 563	80 751	357 855	296 734	310 784
Nairobi	92 265	34 049	–	81 091	164 450	18 377
Total	**262 489**	**577 882**	**5 031 421**	**815 037**	**3 285 759**	**1 241 875**

[a] Reflects the one-time transfer of the backlog of documentation from the United Nations Office at Geneva to Headquarters.

26. The Department adheres scrupulously to the principle of equal treatment of all language services in terms of working conditions and allocation of resources, while taking due account of the specificities of each service. All language staff enjoy equal access to all the tools and components of the global information technology infrastructure and are afforded flexibility in the use of such tools. Resources, including temporary assistance and support from the Contractual Translation Unit, are allocated on the basis of operational needs.

27. As previously reported, the statistical machine translation component of gText, Tapta4UN, was developed in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization at no cost to the United Nations and utilizes a corpus of documents translated by the Department over the past 15 years. The system has been in operation since 2012 and improvements are being introduced continuously on the basis of user feedback.

28. New initiatives to strengthen integrated global management include centralization of the roster of contractual translators to which all duty stations will henceforth have access. The steering group has also endorsed the recommendation that all duty stations should henceforth be invited to participate in the organization and conduct of the language competitive examinations, including the selection and marking of test papers and the interviewing of candidates who pass the written

portion of the examination. Recommendations have also been made to harmonize work processes and standardize best practices, where feasible, across duty stations.

29. With regard to the cost-effective servicing of meetings held away from the main duty stations, the estimated savings are presented in table 6 and details are set out in section VI of the supplementary information. The Department reiterates that, in the absence of more formal accounting rules, the figures are only estimates. Such savings most often accrue to the host countries or to the substantive departments and not to the Department itself. Furthermore, while the Department consistently implements the policy of minimizing costs without having a negative impact on the quality of services, wherever possible, opportunities for such savings are not always within its control. The nominal savings are therefore a one-dimensional quantification and not a realistic measure of performance.

Table 6
Notional savings through implementation of the integrated global management rule
(United States dollars)

Year	*Savings*
2010	675 590
2011	450 000
2012	800 000
2013	1 289 000
2014	1 735 000

30. In preparation for the launch of Umoja in the Department on 1 November (Umoja was launched at the United Nations Office at Nairobi on 1 June 2015), the Department is preparing for the transition from the current Flextime system to Umoja for management of the time and attendance of staff.

B. Performance measurement

1. E-survey

31. The global e-survey captures feedback from Member States on common indicators covering meeting services, translation and interpretation services and the overall quality of conference services at the four main duty stations. In New York, additional information and ratings are collected on technical Secretariat services.

32. The e-survey results are presented in section VII, part 6, of the supplementary information. The e-survey has been adapted in various ways. It is now shorter, user-friendlier and visually more appealing. Some questions are no longer mandatory and the deadlines have been extended. Despite those improvements, however, the response rate remains low.

33. In 2014, although the e-survey was accessed 5,085 times globally, only 200 submissions were received, for a completion rate of 4 per cent. The Department's services were rated either "very good" or "good", the two highest ratings available (see sect. VII of the supplementary information).

34. To complement the e-survey, the Division of Conference Management of the United Nations Office at Geneva identified six meetings at which participants were invited to provide additional views and comments. More than 93 per cent of the 62 respondents gave a rating of "good" or "very good" for the overall quality of conference services in Geneva.

2. Informational meetings and meetings with clients

35. Language-specific informational meetings with Member States and/or meetings with clients were held at all four duty stations over the past year. At Headquarters, 27 representatives of Member States participated, six more than the total for the previous year. Participants exchanged views with representatives of the language services in various areas, including the performance of the global information technology projects, training and outreach activities, reaffirmation of the principle of multilingualism and the quality of translation and interpretation services. The informational meetings for 2015 at Headquarters are scheduled to be held in August.

36. At the United Nations Office at Geneva, document management, translation and interpretation issues were discussed in detail with all main clients (the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the secretariats of the treaty bodies, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Economic Commission for Europe and the Joint Inspection Unit) during a visit by the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management in February 2014. The Division of Conference Management thereafter took the necessary follow-up action. The United Nations Office at Vienna held an informational meeting with the permanent missions on 3 June 2015 for all official languages. Participants expressed overwhelming satisfaction with and appreciation for the meetings and documentation services provided by the Conference Management Service. It was agreed that a follow-up briefing about the online applications available to Member States would be held. The United Nations Office at Nairobi held two language-specific informational meetings in 2014, one in all official languages for all members of the diplomatic corps and one for new members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme.

III. Matters relating to documentation and publications

A. Documents management

37. Documents management statistics for slotted documents at all duty stations are presented in section VIII of the supplementary information. In New York, the overall rate of timely submission by author departments remained at 92 per cent, although only 70 per cent of the submitters met the benchmark of 90 per cent, given that many offices responsible for relatively few documents fell short. Of the documents submitted on time and within word limits, 98 per cent were processed in a timely manner. Consequently, 75 per cent of all pre-session documents issued in New York met the mandated timely issuance benchmarks, up from 71 per cent in 2013 and 72 per cent in 2012.

38. At the United Nations Office at Geneva, the timely submission rate was 88 per cent, up from 87 per cent in 2013 and 85 per cent in 2012. Owing to capacity constraints, however, the timely processing rate fell to 41 per cent for Secretariat reports and 21 per cent for non-Secretariat reports, compared with 50 and 22 per cent, respectively, in 2013.

39. The United Nations Office at Vienna recorded a timely submission rate of 93 per cent in 2014, down from 98 per cent in 2013. The number of slotted documents increased markedly, however, from 162 in 2013 to 214 in 2014, while the timely processing rate rose to 76 per cent in 2014. Consequently, overall compliance with the mandated time frame was 88 per cent, compared with 77 per cent in 2013.

40. At the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the rate of timely submission rose sharply from 22 per cent in 2013 to 73 per cent in 2014. In total, 22 documents were slotted for the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, which was the only calendar meeting serviced by the Office in 2014. The processing compliance rate was 81 per cent. Only 3 of 16 documents submitted on time and within the word limits missed their processing deadlines owing to the high vacancy rates and consequent lack of capacity in some language units.

41. In 2014, the percentage of slotted documents complying with word limits was 80 per cent at Headquarters, nearly 100 per cent at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Nairobi and 90 per cent at the United Nations Office at Vienna.

42. Regarding compliance with the simultaneous distribution policy, in New York official documents are generally distributed both electronically and in hard copy only when they are available in all the official languages. The United Nations Office at Geneva, however, is yet to overcome the systemic challenges created by the establishment of the universal periodic review process. Universal periodic review outcome reports submitted to the Human Rights Council are slotted in accordance with the 10-4-6 rule and only 11 of 45 such documents were issued on time in 2014. Of the 34 documents that were issued late, however, 31 were issued before the beginning of the session. Although universal periodic review reports are accorded high priority, capacity constraints have not permitted full compliance with the 10-4-6 rule. The situation requires careful analysis aimed at reducing the rate of non-simultaneous issuance without significantly increasing costs.

43. The Department continues to accord high priority to documents for the Fifth Committee. In 2014, it initiated a process of collaboration between its document planning and processing units, author entities, the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to project the dates of availability of all pre-session documents for the Fifth Committee. The aim is to involve all clients in planning and managing the workflow so that it is acceptable to all and facilitates the scheduling of the Committee's work, thereby avoiding surprises and improving the ability of all parties to deliver as promised.

B. Coordinator for Multilingualism

44. In paragraph 69 of its resolution 69/250, the General Assembly requested that the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management should be appointed as the new Coordinator for Multilingualism responsible for the overall implementation of multilingualism Secretariat-wide and that the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information should be instructed to continue to inform the public about the importance of that principle. In his most recent report on multilingualism (A/69/282), the Secretary-General suggested that rotation of the role of Coordinator among key offices could be beneficial, given that it would bring different perspectives to bear on how the role might be used to enhance multilingualism and would reflect the practical aspects of implementing a principle with far-reaching implications for the Organization.

45. In response to the above-mentioned request by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General recently appointed the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management as the new Coordinator for Multilingualism. The role of the Coordinator was defined in Assembly resolutions 54/64 and 61/266 and in related reports, in particular A/61/317, paragraph 11, in which the Secretary-General set out the following task for the Coordinator:

> The task of the Coordinator is to harmonize the measures implemented and to propose strategies to ensure that United Nations linguistic practices are in keeping with the recommendations and provisions of the various resolutions relating to multilingualism. Among other things, the Coordinator centralizes the proposals and requests having to do with multilingualism throughout the Secretariat.

46. The responsibility of the Coordinator is based on the cooperation of all departments concerned and the availability of the necessary input that needs to be defined in the context of the agenda item on the pattern of conferences.

47. The Department continues to focus on supporting multilingualism by concentrating on the simultaneous and timely issuance of high-quality parliamentary documentation in the official languages, in accordance with specific mandates, and providing interpretation services, as required, to the meetings of bodies entitled thereto. The Department of Public Information and other departments and offices, as appropriate, will continue to manage and monitor the public United Nations websites to ensure their adherence to the principle of multilingualism.

C. Digitization of important older United Nations documents

48. The Department of Public Information and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management are working together to increase online access to historical United Nations documents. An estimated 17 million paper documents exist in United Nations repositories, mostly from the pre-digital era before 1993. Some 3 million of them have been identified as particularly important and in need of urgent digitization. The complementary skills and resources of both Departments have been melded into a single team to address this challenge. As at April 2015, 360,000 documents had been digitized, catalogued and made available, representing some 11 per cent of the estimated total.

D. Digital support of meeting proceedings

49. The responsibility for supporting and further refining the paper-smart concept as a corporate solution has been assigned to the Office of Information and Communications Technology. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has continued to implement it in its mandated activities. In November 2014, additional services were launched to strengthen the premise set forth in the report of the Secretary-General that, in addition to digital copies, paper will always be available to meeting participants on demand (A/68/123, para. 6). This has been accomplished by establishing a documents assistance centre in the North Delegates Lounge to serve as a central point of support for delegates seeking documentation assistance. It complements the services provided by the Delegates Documents Counter on the 1B level of the Secretariat Building and the conference officer desks in the meeting rooms. Those service points ensure that delegates are able to obtain documents on demand. To further ensure that Member States have all required information, an announcement is regularly published in the *Journal of the United Nations* advising delegations on how to gain access to hard and soft copies of documents.

50. In Vienna, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Legal Subcommittee completed their pilot projects with the use of digital recordings and at their sessions in 2015 agreed to discontinue the use of unedited transcripts and to use digital recordings on a permanent basis, on the understanding that the digital recording application should be further enhanced. The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, whose pilot project with digital recordings also ran until 2015, recently decided to prolong the practice of providing digital recordings in parallel with summary records until at least its forty-ninth session, in 2016. At that time, the Secretariat could report on any additional information to the General Assembly.

51. Concerning legal, financial and human resources implications, it is recalled that recordings of public, open meetings of those bodies, as well as most other bodies, have been made since the early years of the Organization for archival purposes. Those recordings were made available at the request of Member States on an ad hoc basis. Modern technology facilitates easier access to the recordings and bodies that decide to use them make them available on their websites, as is the case with the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law. Digital recordings were introduced by those bodies with the intention of obtaining a modern, authentic, readily available and less-expensive digital tool as an alternative to written meeting records or as an additional service.

IV. Matters relating to translation and interpretation

A. Enhancing the capacity of language professionals

52. Competitive examinations for the recruitment of candidates to fill language posts are held as needed, depending on the status of the rosters of successful candidates and the projected staffing needs of the service or section in question. Examinations are staggered so that those that are most urgent are held earlier. The

examination schedule is widely advertised through the language careers portal, universities in the memorandum of understanding network, newspapers and, increasingly, social media. Vacancies arising from anticipated retirements are advertised at least six months in advance in order to ensure the timely completion of the selection process and a smooth succession.

53. The Department's internship programme has developed an enviable track record as an incubator for successful candidates in the language competitive examinations. Collaboration with partner universities in the memorandum of understanding network continued to be strengthened over the past year, culminating in the holding, in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, in April 2015, of the Fourth Conference of Memorandum of Understanding Universities. Potential candidates for traineeships continue to be identified through ad hoc testing and outreach efforts. Chiefs of language services are also being encouraged to make full use of the lists of candidates who came within a certain margin of passing the examinations and who, with the agreement of the Office of Human Resources Management, are now considered eligible for temporary contracts and traineeships. This measure is without prejudice to recruitment of regular language staff exclusively through the examinations and is expected to facilitate the enlargement of the pools of qualified language professionals eligible for temporary recruitment and contracts during peak workload periods to complement in-house capacity.

54. Other initiatives currently under way include enhancement of the form and content of the Department's online careers portal, with support from the universities in the memorandum of understanding network in translating content into all the official languages; use of social media to announce the holding of language competitive examinations; initiatives to raise the Department's profile, such as the expansion of the annual St. Jerome Translation Contest to include participants from universities in the network; targeting of prospective freelances through professional bodies such as the International Association of Conference Translators; and more frequent exchanges of staff with sister international organizations.

55. The overall effectiveness of the outreach programme has been analysed in terms of the success rate of candidates from universities in the memorandum of understanding network in the language competitive examinations. Data on the candidates who were rostered in 2010-2014 after passing such an examination were analysed to determine which universities had trained them. In total, 56 per cent of the successful examination candidates in 2010-2014 had attended at least one of the universities in the network. The analysis confirms that, from a recruitment perspective, the Department has generally partnered with the right universities. Intensive pedagogical assistance, such as that provided by the Russian Translation Service and the Russian Interpretation Section, expedites the preparation of candidates from such universities for the examinations. The results of examinations held in other years will be analysed with a view to validating the findings and identifying trends.

56. Further expansion of the network of universities will be governed by the projected staffing needs of individual language services, the capacity of those services to provide cooperation and support to additional universities and the desirability of ensuring equitable geographical coverage of the network. On the basis of those criteria, the Department decided to accept the application of the King Fahd School of Translation, in Tangier, Morocco, to join the network. Outreach to

universities in Africa is continuing under the African project and with pedagogical and other forms of assistance from the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The assistance of permanent missions has been solicited to identify potential partner universities in other regions, including Central America and the Caribbean.

57. The United Nations Office at Nairobi is endeavouring to reduce vacancy rates in its language services by proactively seeking out candidates, posting all vacancies in Inspira and offering temporary contracts to qualified candidates with a view to training and preparing them for the language competitive examinations. Those efforts have yielded positive results. Four current staff members of the Office were recruited on temporary contracts, trained and successfully prepared for the examinations in that way. In addition, three interpreters that took the training offered under the Pan-African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation initiative are often recruited in Nairobi as freelances: two English interpreters from the University of Nairobi and one French interpreter from the University of Ghana. The Consortium was formally established in 2012 in Addis Ababa and includes universities from Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. It is serviced by a permanent secretariat operating from the Office that ensures synergy between the partners and coordinates and advises the members on best practices.

58. In addition, staff at the United Nations Office at Nairobi continued to assist in the training and testing of students at the University of Nairobi whenever the University requested the Office's help.

59. The upgrading of language posts to the P-5 level, in line with the principle of equal grade for equal work, has also had a positive impact on the vacancy rates at the Office and is expected to assist in the further reduction of vacancies and the retention of staff at the duty station. The average vacancy rate for language staff at the Office has fallen to 19 per cent, compared with a previous peak of 35 per cent. By the end of 2015, the rate is estimated to fall further to 13 per cent.

B. Quality of interpretation and translation

60. The Department recognizes the critical role of its language professionals in facilitating the work of the Organization's intergovernmental machinery and therefore attaches the highest priority to the quality, and in particular the accuracy, of its translation output. It ensures quality by maintaining a rigorous selection process for its language staff, providing intensive in-house training and mentoring to new recruits during a two-year probationary period, editing all documents submitted in English to facilitate accurate translation into the other official languages and providing written guidelines and instructions, terminological databases, reference support and computer-assisted and machine translation tools. The output of relatively inexperienced translators at the P-2 and P-3 levels is systematically revised by revisers at the P-4 and P-5 levels. Likewise, the Interpretation Service attaches utmost importance to the quality of its output. Interpreters join the United Nations after a rigorous examination. On-the-job training, external studies and internal workshops are among the tools used to maintain quality. Senior interpreters monitor the work of junior colleagues and give them regular feedback. The work of freelance interpreters is monitored in the same way. The renewal of their annual contracts is subject to satisfactory performance.

61. The Department has long recognized the importance of terminological support for translators, editors and interpreters as a means of ensuring the accuracy, consistency and overall high quality of their output. To that end, it has developed a global terminology portal (http://untermportal.un.org) through which users can access hundreds of thousands of entries. The system is designed to be compatible with the technological tools used by translators and interpreters, including gText, and includes records and glossaries from various local data sets, thereby enhancing the global consistency and quality of the terminology used by language professionals at all duty stations and by external contractors. Work on the portal has greatly enhanced terminological collaboration between language services, duty stations and regional commissions. External partners have also expressed interest in exchanging data and in using the system.

62. The contractual translation rosters are being expanded and clear procedures are being developed to ensure that every individual and institutional contractor on the roster is regularly subject to quality control assessments and feedback, based on standardized criteria, in all six official languages and across the four main duty stations. A contractor management application tool is used to manage the contractual operations, while the eLUNa component of the gText suite of applications will provide contractors with the same level of terminological and reference support that is available to in-house staff.

63. With regard to editing, the Secretariat edits all draft and adopted resolutions to ensure that they are clear, factually accurate, consistent, grammatically and syntactically correct, in conformity with United Nations editorial standards and translatable into the other five languages. Editors are required to consult the relevant officials to clarify any grammatical or other irregularities whose correction could affect the substantive meaning of draft or adopted resolutions and to obtain written approval for any corrections that may be agreed upon. Regarding measures to enhance editing services, various editorial and translation support capacities and operations have been consolidated, resulting in earlier issuance of concorded General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, streamlined production of global terminology data, streamlined editorial and translation support processes and reduction of the competitive examination burden.